

ways of strengthening relations and current international issues.

Cyprus

During his meeting with the President of Cyprus, the Prime Minister held discussion on matters of bilateral interest as well as ways for strengthening relations between the two countries and current international issues.

China

Prime Minister met Chinese Premier Li Peng on 16 November and expressed the hope that President Jiang Zemin's visit to India would lead to improve relations between the two countries. The two sides expressed their respective view-points on a number of issues, including those of concern to either side, which came up for discussions during the meeting.

Bangladesh

Prime Minister met the Prime Minister of Bangladesh on 17 September and reviewed bilateral relations. It was agreed to take steps to enhance relations in all areas of interest to both sides. Prime Minister also briefed the Bangladesh Prime Minister on the situation in the region and referred to Pakistan's support for terrorism in India.

Iraq

Prime Minister met the Vice President of Iraq on 16 November. Bilateral relations and future economic cooperation with Iraq after the UN economic sanctions against that country are lifted, were discussed.

Nepal

The Prime Minister received the Prime Minister of Nepal on 17 November. A wide range of subjects were covered during discussions and the friendly, cordial nature of bilateral relations was reiterated. The discussions emphasised not only the need for intensifying bilateral economic cooperation but also the need for diversifying trade relations. During exchange of views on latest developments in the South Asian region, specific emphasis was also laid on the need for exploiting the immense economic potential of the region for the benefit of its people.

Iran

During the meeting between the Prime Minister and First Vice President of Iran on November 16, issues of bilateral, regional and international importance were discussed.

Afghanistan

During the meeting with the President of Afghanistan on November 15, situation in Afghanistan was

discussed. Our Prime Minister reiterated India's support to the Rabbani Government and called for cessation of outside interference in Afghanistan.

Cuba

Prime Minister called on President Fidel Castro on 17 November. The two leaders recognised existence of extremely warm and cordial relations between the two countries over the last several decades and need to strengthen them further. They discussed the prevailing international situation in relation to Russia, China, Palestine etc. and multilateral economic issues, in particular the question of eradication of poverty and hunger, augmenting agricultural production, population control and South-South cooperation. President Castro stressed the need for cooperation among Third World countries in solving their problems. He wanted India to play a leadership role and reiterated Cuba's desire to see India as a Permanent Member of the Security Council. He accepted invitation of our Prime Minister to visit India at his convenience.

[English]

Bridges in Bihar

3471. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) the number of bridges constructed on the National Highways in Bihar since 1994;

(b) the total expenditure incurred thereon;

(c) whether some of the proposals of construction of bridges in Bihar are pending with the Union Government; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) Seven.

(b) Expenditure upto 3/96 is reported to be about Rs. 263.98 lakhs.

(c) and (d) No proposal of Bridge works is pending with Ministry.

Indian Assistance to Nepal

3472. SHRI K.P. SINGH DEO : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of Projects being implemented in Nepal with the assistance from India;

(b) the cost of those Projects and the extent of assistance extended by the Government for implementing those projects; and

(c) the steps taken to improve bilateral relation between both the countries?